

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

June 2012

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, June 21, 2012, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Sandra Moncrief, who will speak on Mississippi's being the first state to grant women the right to own property. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call by noon on Wednesday, June 20, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

Even though October is still several months away, it's not too early to begin thinking about and planning the Hancock County Historical Society Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night, Wednesday, October 31, 2012, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need volunteers to help prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House.



St. Stanislaus College (2012)

—Photo courtesy of BR Hawkins Studio & Design

Early History of St. Stanislaus College

Edited by
Eddie Coleman

Saint Stanislaus, one of the oldest prep schools in the South, was founded in 1854 by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart at the earnest request of the Reverend Stanislaus Buteux, Pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf Church in Bay St. Louis. An earlier school taught by the Christian Brothers had opened behind the church in 1852. However, the yellow fever epi-

demic of 1853 had claimed most of the teaching staff.

Not to be dissuaded, Father Buteux visited Mobile in 1854 and convinced three of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart to return with him to start the school again. They were Brothers Basil, Aloysius, and Leo, who lived at the Presbytery and were paid eighteen dollars a month.

A forward thinker, Father Buteux had envisioned a much larger school and one with a greater reach than the one originally established, so he made a trip to Paris to the Superior General of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and asked for financial help

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

and more teachers. Four more Brothers sailed immediately from France, and Father Buteux also received the financial assistance to buy half of the necessary land upon which to build a school. With a loan from the good father, the Brothers purchased land on the Bay of St. Louis for four thousand dollars.

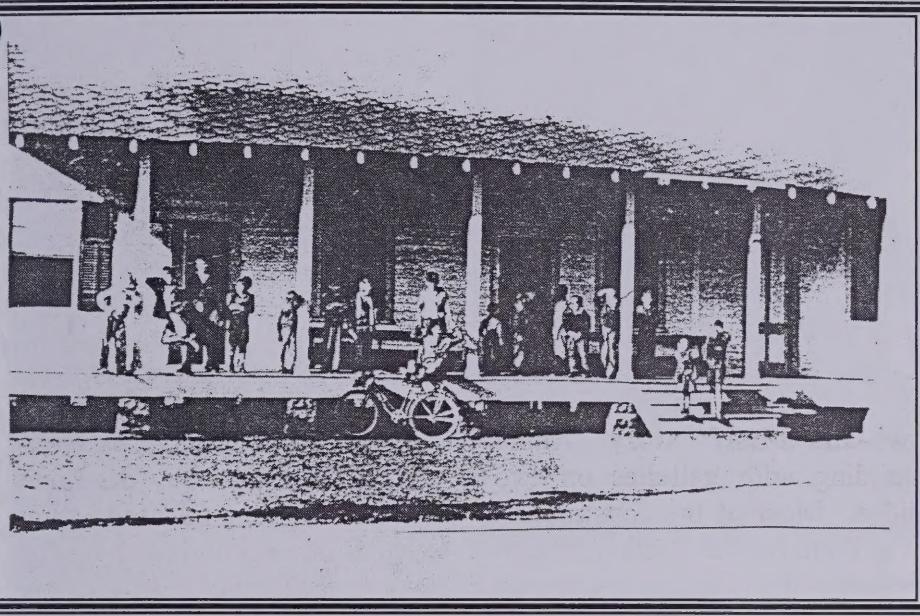
Initially the school was a two-and-a-half story frame building with galleries on two sides. Most of the construction was done by the Brothers themselves with some help from a few laborers. The school was named St. Stanislaus in honor of Father Buteux's patron saint, and from the beginning it accepted both boarders and day students. Immediately prosperous, the school added additional buildings in 1859, one of which consisted of two dining rooms, a community room, a director's

room, and a chapel and the other which was a dormitory.

The outbreak of the Civil War presented challenges for the Brothers to continue to accept boarders as well as day students. Not to be outdone, Brother Athanasius rented two houses in New Orleans, one to provide living quarters for boarding students from the Louisiana plantations and the other to serve as classrooms. Back in Bay St. Louis Brother Florimond and three other Brothers continued the day school during the course of the War. They were able to obtain supplies for the school and free passage to New Orleans through amenable relations with the Federal Commandant at Fort Pike, LA. The year after the War, boarders were again accepted at Bay St. Louis with enrollment at 120 boarders and 75 day students.



St. Stanislaus College and surrounding area, pre-Hurricane Camille



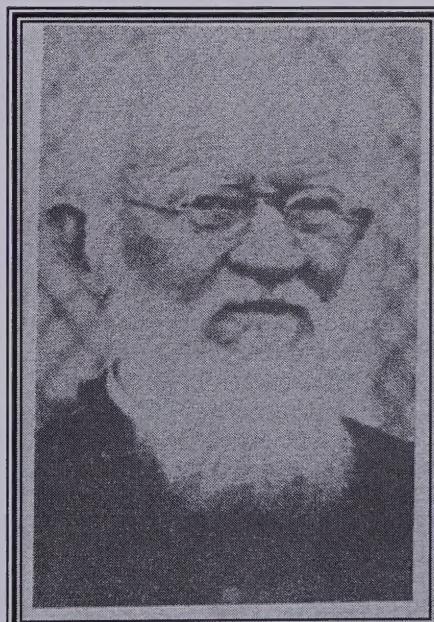
The "Sorbonne" or Rip University

In 1870 the Brothers at St. Stanislaus opened a free school for local boys whose parents couldn't afford to pay tuition. Called the "Sorbonne" after the Parisian university, it quickly became popular and enrolled sixty students the first year. It was staffed by one teacher, Brother Elphege Veyriere.

In the fall of 1882, Brother Stephen Hanlon became director of the free day school with Brother Achilles as his assistant. The enrollment that year was 102. Housed in a large room furnished with enough benches to seat about sixty pupils, it admitted students from grades one through eight. The students were seated on the benches according to grade level, and as they progressed to the next grade level, they were promoted by being moved up to the next bench.

Because Brother Stephen had a long, flowing beard, the boys nicknamed him "Rip Van

Winkle," and the school soon became known as Rip's University, later shortened to Rip University. A stern disciplinarian, Brother Stephen often employed corporal punishment using any textbook at hand. Sometimes he also used one of his two favorite sticks: "Licorice," the two-foot stock of a buggy whip or "Molasses," an eighteen inch



Brother Stephen

ruler so called because of its color. In any event Brother Stephen's training was thorough, and his students became successful men of the community.

One of the most prevalent threats to the health of the boarders was yellow fever. The school endured epidemics in 1867, 1870, 1897, and 1905. Fortunately, by the turn of the century, advances in medicine by the United States Army medical team and other doctors in Cuba brought the dreaded disease under control. Of course, the outbreaks caused the boarders to be sent home and caused the deaths of many of the brothers. On one occasion to insure the health of the boys, Brother Isidore chartered a train to take the Louisiana boys home via Nashville and Memphis.

The school has also endured many hurricanes during its history with varying degrees of destruction wrought by each one. As did most residents of Bay St. Louis, the Brothers fortified their beachfronts with early seawalls, usually made of cypress pilings. Quite often if the hurricane had much force, the seawalls had to be rebuilt after the storm. In 1915 Brother Isidore refused to replace the one at St. Stanislaus following the usual blueprint. Instead he fashioned one of his own design even though it was considered "inadequate" by engineers. However, it withstood the Hurricane of 1947 while the debris of the "engineered" walls lay on the ground.

An administrator who left a deep impression on the school was Brother Stanislaus. He



Brother Julian and his basketball team—1937

—from the Pat Murphy Collection, HCHS

served three terms: 1881—1883; 1888—1898; and 1904—1913. The enrollment was very poor when he first arrived, but he used the daily papers to bring the school to the attention of prospective students. He had a brochure printed that described in detail the activities, the curriculum, and the

disciplinary rules of St. Stanislaus. In addition, during their vacations the teachers visited former and prospective students in an attempt to increase the school's enrollment.

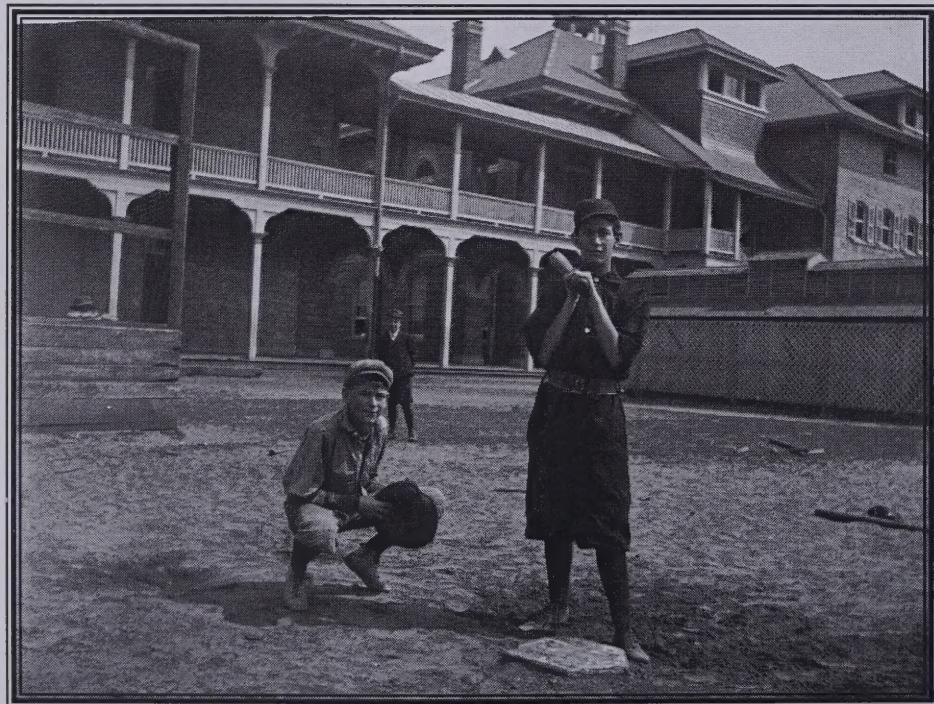
One of these extracurricular activities was sports. Up to the early 1880's the athletic

program was conducted on an intramural basis, but when the Louisville and Nashville railroad started scheduling semiweekly excursions along the Coast, the schools in New Orleans took advantage of the low-cost fare to set up keen interscholastic rivalry with the Coast schools, and St. Stanislaus took a very active part.

In 1898, Brother Isidore, a man of strong character, succeeded Brother Stanislaus. Ruggedly featured, strong minded, and determined, this man enjoyed any type of physical labor. Nevertheless, he was a scholar of mathematics, classical Greek and Latin literature, and theology. A rigid taskmaster, he was highly regarded and respected by his students.

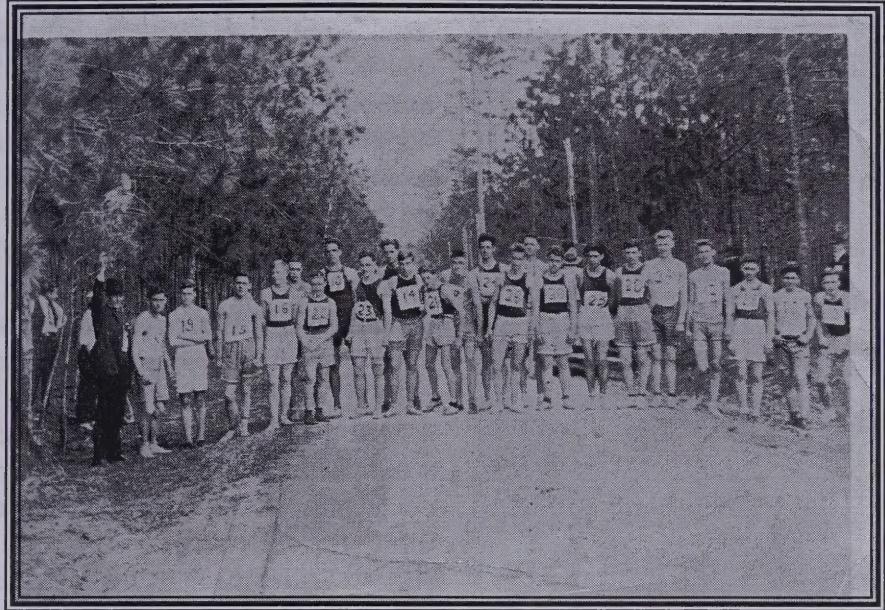
It was during Brother Isidore's administration that the school faced its greatest challenge heretofore. About 9:30 P. M., on June 21, 1903, shortly after the boarding students had retired for the night, a long smoldering fire—probably set by a discarded cigarette—was discovered in the clothes room just over the dormitory where trunks and suitcases had been placed that evening in preparation for the next morning's departure for summer vacation. The boys were quickly roused from their beds and moved to safety.

Soon the entire front building was in flames, and efforts were turned to saving some of the more valued contents of the buildings. Brother Isadore managed to save the school records and other volunteers rescued many of the library books. Unfortunately, in less than three hours, all of the beachfront build-



Young SSC baseball players "At the Bat"

—from the George Mallard Collection, HCHS



St. Stanislaus runners, early 1900's

ings were reduced to embers and ashes. Only the kitchen and dining room remained intact.

Although St. Stanislaus had suffered great loss, the hotels in Bay St. Louis opened all of their vacant rooms for the boys to spend the night, and those who

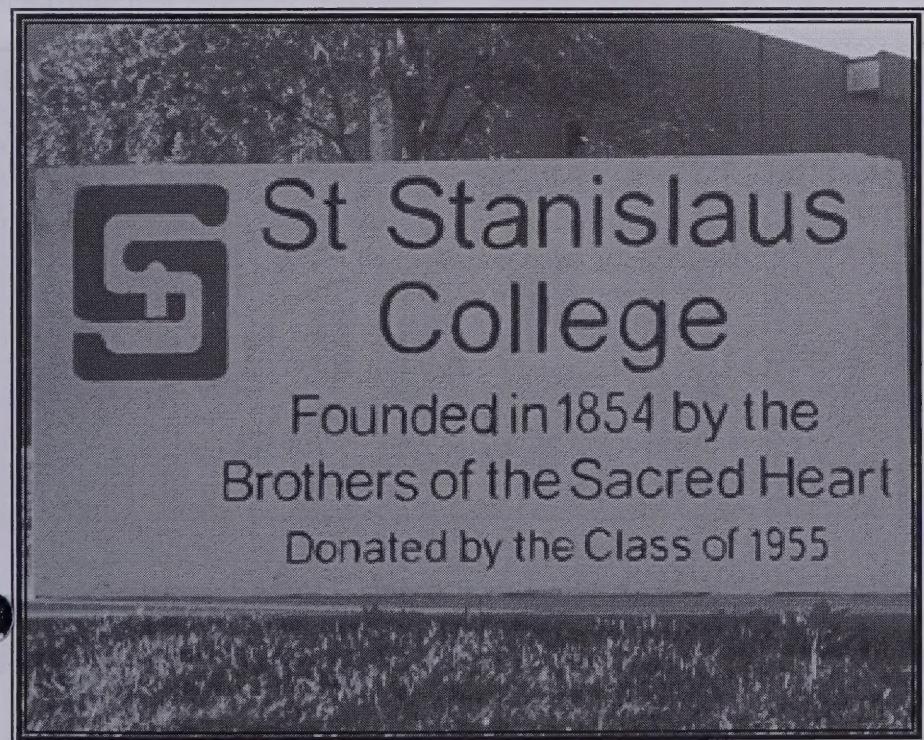
didn't stay in the hotels were lodged in private homes. The following morning, the boys boarded the 10:00 A. M. train and headed for home with the promise to return in the fall.

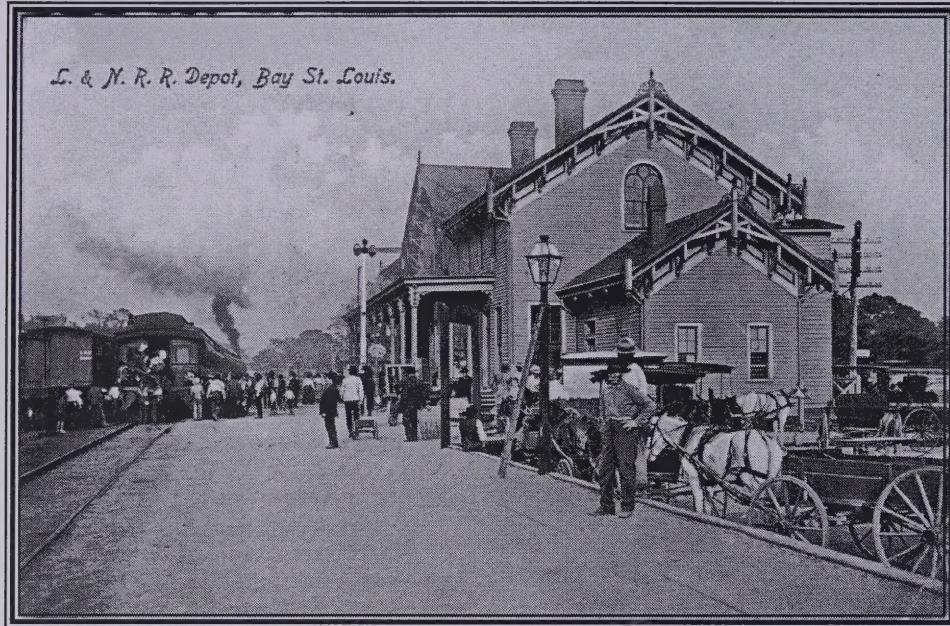
The Brothers immediately set to work, determined to have a

building ready for the opening of school in September. A temporary building for classrooms and a dormitory were hastily constructed out of scrap lumber. On October 6, 1903, the school opened with a near-capacity enrollment of 178 students. In addition to the temporary dormitory space, the Brothers were able to rent five cottages on the beach, just south of the school. Given the names of "Lara's Villa," "Nellie's Villa," "Avondale," "Bellevue," and "Irish Villa," each one housed a certain number of boys along with a Brother. This temporary living arrangement worked out very well during the 1903-1904 school year.

Not to be overcome, the Brothers had plans for permanent buildings drawn and finalized by August of 1903. Although the plans were drawn by a New Orleans architectural firm, the construction bid went to local contractor Charles Sanger. Ground was broken in late August, and by Christmas the brick work and the roof were completed. At the end of June on the anniversary of the fire, the new buildings were completed and ready for occupancy.

Thus, the early chapters in the history of St. Stanislaus came to an end. In the ensuing decades, the school faced other challenges including hurricanes such as Camille and Katrina. Nevertheless, even with these adversities, St. Stanislaus College has continued to educate young men to take their places in the world. Continuously striving for excellence, the school has entered the Twenty-first Century embracing new technologies and challenges, but remembering the base upon





Original Bay St. Louis Depot, built in 1876

—from the Paul Jermyn Collection, HCHS

which its educational philosophy was founded and still stands.

SOURCES:

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

"St. Stanislaus, Oldest Local Institution." Souvenir Centennial Edition, *Hancock County Eagle*. August 1958: 27+.

burned in 1928. Both depots were stops for Louisville and Nashville (L&N) trains that traveled the tracks for decades carrying, among thousands of passengers, military troops and New Orleans commuters.

The original depot (a

handsome two story structure) had a full-fledged restaurant that accommodated passengers who hopped off the train for about twenty minutes during its stops in Bay St. Louis. One local resident, long deceased, remembered a "colored man," attired as a chef, appearing on the arrival of trains and vigorously beating a dish pan calling attention to "dinner [is] served." Among the items served were ham sandwiches for ten cents described as "thin as a dime" but delicious.

With the advent of the dining car, full dining rooms in depots became rare, but here in Bay St. Louis, the depot restaurant was replaced by fried oyster and fresh fish sandwich vendors. The vendors became well known, and "through" passengers often bypassed the dining car to take advantage of the stop at the Bay St. Louis depot. Gradually these vendors also disappeared, but two of them, Laurent and Choina, continued to make and sell their

Did You Know This about Hancock County?

By
Scott Bagley

Did you know that the present depot building in Bay St. Louis is one of only two depot structures that have serviced the town since trains began coming through the area in the early 1870's? The current mission style depot building was built and completed in 1929, replacing the 1876 wooden structure that



The Bay St. Louis Depot, built in 1929, currently serves the city as its Visitor's Center.

sandwiches into the 1940's.

The depot station became an Amtrak stop, but this service was discontinued after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. CSX freight trains have replaced the L&N, but the sound of these trains running regularly through the town bring back many memories of older trains and the human cargo they conveyed. The City of Bay St. Louis purchased the depot from CSX in 1993 in order to preserve an important part of the area's heritage. The depot is now a Visitor's Center reinforcing the area's return to welcoming tourists to Hancock County on their way to and from again.

SOURCE:

The Sea Coast Echo. Golden Jubilee Edition. Bay St. Louis, MS, 1942.

Devil's Swamp— 1830 Indian Hideout

Compiled and
Edited by
Eddie Coleman

Long before the advent of the French explorers, the area now known as Hancock County was inhabited by Native Americans, members of the Choctaw Muskhogean family. The area of present-day Bay St. Louis contained an Indian village called Chicapoula (or Chou-cou-poulo), meaning "bad grass." Living in this paradise, the natives hunted plentiful game such as venison and buffalo and fished the bountiful waters of the Mississippi Sound.



Mississippi Choctaw Family in 1908

After the white settlers came, remnants of those early inhabitants moved farther from the Bay of St. Louis into an area known as Devil's Swamp and lived in houses mostly along Bayou LaCroix. The men continued to hunt and fish, but they also tanned skins, and all members of the tribe were constantly on guard against the depredations of occasional wolves. The women cultivated crops consisting of corn, beans, and rice, but chiefly rice. The children were taught to weave baskets, and the boys, to make blow guns. Shy with strangers, the Indians were, nonetheless, quite social among themselves. They enjoyed games, festivals, dancing, and singing. In fact wedding feasts and dances could last for days.

Obviously, news of world events didn't move so swiftly in the 1800's as it does today with the internet and other modern media, so those Native Americans

who lived in Hancock County didn't hear of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek early on. Signed in 1830 this pact allotted lands in the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) to Mississippi Indians in exchange for their lands and homes in Mississippi. The main thing these Native Americans were aware of is that white settlers were homesteading lands which belonged to the Indians and had belonged to them for generations. Some of the Indians took what the U. S. government offered them and moved west to Indian Territory. A few even became rich when oil was discovered on their newly acquired land. Some of the them moved to Choctaw lands near Philadelphia, MS, in Neshoba County. Those who didn't leave moved deeper into the marshes and bayous of Devil's Swamp, hiding out to continue their inherited traditions and culture.

Some of those few Indi-

ans, who remained in Hancock County intermarried with local blacks and whites and became a part of the rich cultural mix of people whose descendants live in the area today. In addition, remnants of their culture may be found in arrowheads and other relics gleaned from the fertile earth of Hancock County. These few artifacts, some place names, and traces of noble blood in their descendants tell of a proud race discovered by the European settlers who first came to this newly found land in the late Seventeenth Century.

SOURCES:

"Devil's Swamp Was 1830 Indian Hideout." *Sea Coast Echo*. 28 May 1978, Heritage Edition.: 7B.

"Choctaw Tribe Really First Settlers Here." *Hancock County Eagle*. August 1958, Souvenir Centennial Edition. 25.

The Mallard Collection

By
Charles Gray

A selection of the Hancock County Historical Society's collection of Mallard photographs has been superbly rescanned by Paul Jermyn and cleaned and perfectly restored by Joe Tomasovsky. A limited edition of fifteen of the beautiful early Bay Saint Louis photographs are now available for viewing at the Lobrano House. They may be ordered in 11" by 14" prints in acid-free mounts ready for framing. An example of one of these photographs can be seen on page 4 of this newsletter.

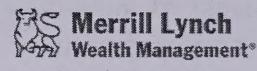
These glass slide photographs were made by George Mallard, son of the famous New Orleans furniture maker, Prudent Mallard, between 1900 and 1914. There will be several presentations in museums and art shows in Mississippi and Louisiana during the next few months. Please visit the Kate Lobrano House to see the collection before it goes on tour.

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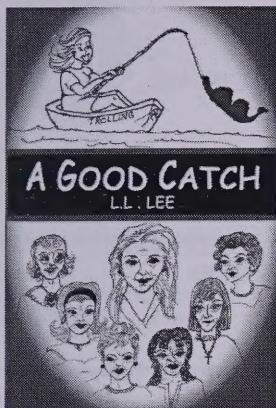
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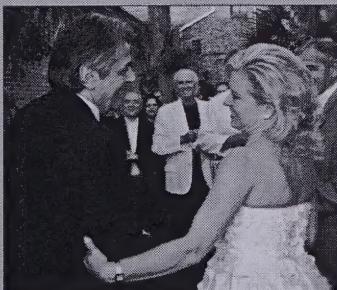


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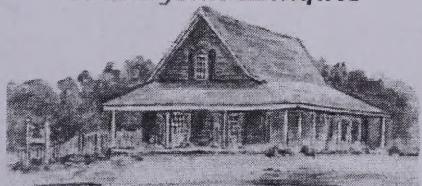


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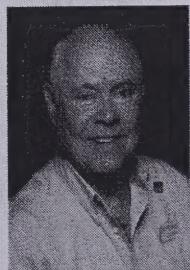
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